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RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2266
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2386
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0911
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1663
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2019
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2440
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4872
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1535
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000779

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR G. GARLAND
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/05/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: DETAILED ACCOUNTS FROM WENIMBI DAM

REF: HARARE 751

Classified By: Charge d'affaires, a.i. for reason 1.4(d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Two survivors of beatings in Mashonaland East with knowledge of bodies found in Wenimbi Dam near Marondera and one man who witnessed bodies allegedly retrieved from the dam at a local morgue recounted their experiences to poloff (ref A). While their stories are compelling and believable, particularly given that Marondera remains one of the most tense areas in Zimbabwe, additional facts and eye-witness accounts would further strengthen the allegation that numerous bodies were intentionally thrown into Wenimbi and other dams in eastern Zimbabwe. Given their lack of first-hand knowledge, Post does not believe at this time that their public testimony, if given in the U.S., would significantly highlight the violence that has occurred since April. Furthermore, public exposure could subject them and their families, as well as neighbors, to violent retaliation.
END SUMMARY.

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Long-time ZANU stronghold turns MDC on March 29
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¶2. (C) On September 4, 2008, poloff accompanied the program officer from the Counselling Services Unit (CSU) to the safe house in Harare where the two survivors and one witness have been staying. All are from the Svosve rural area, in the Marondera East constituency in Mashonaland East. The Marondera area has long been a ZANU-PF stronghold, but that changed on March 29 when Marondera Central elected the Movement for Democratic Change's (MDC) Ian Kay as a Member of Parliament and a majority of the local councilor seats were won by the MDC. All three of the individuals who we interviewed are known MDC supporters. They told poloff that intimidation in the area began in April after Mugabe's defeat

on March 29 and was led by Colonel Kajesa and the ZANU-PF MP for neighboring Marondera East, Tracy Mutinhiri. (NOTE: Ambrose Mutinhiri, her husband and the MP for Marondera West, is a retired army commander and was the Minister of Youth Development and Employment. END NOTE.) Following are the accounts of the three individuals.

Survivor Dominick Tembedza: "As Good as a Journalist"

13. (C) Dominick Tembedza, his parents, and siblings are known MDC supporters in Kundishora Village (Ward 20). The Tembedza home was first attacked on the night of June 18, 2008. Tembedza estimated there were about 250 people - departing a ZANU rally led by Mutinhiri and Kajesa - who came to the homestead singing and chanting that they wanted to "chop off their heads". They also accused Tembedza, who does some freelance photography, of being "as good as a journalist" because he owned a camera. Tembedza and his brothers fought off the attackers, many of whom they knew personally, and the attackers eventually left.

14. (C) At around midnight on June 23, Tembedza estimated as many as 600 people came to the homestead on foot and in two eight-ton Nissan trucks. The seven people in his home tried to fight the attackers with sticks and stones, but they were quickly overwhelmed and all were seriously injured. Dominick was hit on the head several times with an axe and still has visible scars on his head, face, hand, and leg. His finger

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remains broken. He and his seriously injured sister Elizabeth were loaded into a white truck and dumped at separate locations in the Nyambori river, which flows into the nearby Wenimbi dam. Tembedza pretended he was dead after being dumped. He stayed at the river until about 4:00 am, when he began making his way back home. He arrived shortly before his sister. At home, they discovered the entire homestead had been burned and his family members were still there, seriously injured. No one in his family received any medical attention in the following weeks.

15. (C) Tembedza attempted to access medical care and assistance from MDC structures in Marondera for himself and his family, but he was unsuccessful until August 18 when the MDC offered to help him get to Harare to receive treatment for his broken finger. His sister died from her injuries on August 19, and although he asked the MDC for assistance with her funeral, none was given.

Survivor Lloyd Masangomai, polling agent

16. (C) Lloyd Masangomai was an MDC polling agent during the March 29 election in Ward 21 in Svosve and was on the MDC campaign team. After the March election, he was named at ZANU rallies as someone that needed to return to the ZANU fold. On May 10, he fled his home and sought shelter in Harare, leaving his pregnant wife and parents. On June 19, he returned home, believing it was safe. At midnight, seven people came to his home, including one person he knew. They took him from the house and put him into a white twincab pick-up truck where a different group of seven men were waiting for him. The men in the truck interrogated him as they drove away, asking him questions about MDC self-defense strategies and if the MDC had weapons, and accusing him of "going around with Ian Kay chopping heads off". (NOTE: MP Kay was arrested in May on charges of instigating violence in this area. The charges were recently dropped. END NOTE)

17. (C) When they arrived at Wenimbi dam, four of the men took him out of the truck and continued to interrogate him and beat him severely on his feet. As he lay at the banks of the dam, his captors discussed whether they should throw him into

the water or not. After some debate, they decided to leave him on the shore and drove away. Hours later, he struggled to crawl home, since he was unable to walk.

18. (C) Masangomai heard from his cousin, who is a teacher at Wenimbi Primary School, located on the shore of Wenimbi dam, that 19 bodies were recovered from the dam over two days in mid-July. According to the cousin, after a fisherman became entangled in his nets and drowned in the dam, his family called for the police to recover his body. On the first day, police retrieved eight bodies. On the second day, ten more bodies were retrieved, and the eleventh was that of the fisherman. The first 18 bodies were bound at the feet and across the chest, with a large stone tied to the chest. Masangomai heard that they were all men, no one recognized them and that none had visible injuries. Police allegedly said they would come back a third day, but never did.

Bodies at the Marondera Morgue--Shadreck Muhlwa

19. (C) Shadreck Muhlwa, an MDC activist whose cousin is a recently elected councilor in Marondera urban, told us that on August 3, his one-month old son died at home. He took the body to the hospital to request a report of death. Because no doctor was present, he was taken to the mortuary to leave

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the body. As is standard practice, he was taken in the mortuary by a low-ranking policeman. When Muhlwa asked if he could leave the body in one of the cold rooms near the entrance, the policeman told him they were all full. Muhlwa pressed how that was possible, and the policeman said the rooms were full of bodies retrieved from the dam.

110. (C) When a doctor was subsequently available to write his son's death report at the morgue, Muhlwa was again escorted there by a different policeman. The policeman told him the cold rooms were full of bodies from the dam. Muhlwa asked if he could see, saying he might have a relative or friend who had died. The policeman said he could look, "if he had the guts". Muhlwa opened one shelf that contained two bodies. He told police that they were greenish/white in color and still bound at the feet and around the chest, with a stone tied across the chest. He and the other survivors believe the policemen were forthcoming because they were low-ranking MDC supporters. (NOTE: In the March 29 election, police ballots were overwhelmingly in favor of the MDC. END NOTE.)

How (and when) to get the story out?

111. (C) COMMENT: All three men told police they feared retaliation against themselves and their immediate and extended families if they openly told of these incidents while their families remained in Marondera. CSU plans to move them to South Africa on September 10 or 11, since they are still wanted in Marondera and remain at risk. While their stories appear credible, believable, and consistent, these individuals are not eye witnesses. The three accounts taken together provide circumstantial evidence that bodies were dumped in the dam, but these individuals did not see the bodies dumped, nor did they see them retrieved.

112. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: The three men indicated they were prepared to take the risk to tell their accounts, including before an international audience in the United States. However, they would not do so unless their family members are safely outside of the rural areas, and perhaps even in Harare. They are deeply distrustful of South African President Thabo Mbeki and question how safe they will be in South Africa, where they report the Zimbabwean Central Intelligence Office is very active. The men agree that they would feel comfortable returning to Zimbabwe when things are

"settled", by which they mean when the MDC is in control.
(NOTE: Even if their families would be safe in Harare in the short-term, they may not be able to return in the long-term if ZANU security structures maintain control. END NOTE)

¶13. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: If this incident is publicized in the U.S., Mugabe will almost certainly deny it as Western propaganda. In addition, local residents, particularly witnesses from the school -- which includes children -- would likely face increased intimidation and violence. A violent response is more likely if the ongoing ZANU-PF--MDC negotiations break down and the Mugabe regime focuses on consolidating power. Given the risks involved, and considering the circumstantial nature of the evidence, Ambassador McGee at this point recommends against bringing these individuals to the U.S. to publicly recount their stories. Post will endeavor to develop eye-witness testimony on this incident. END COMMENT.
MCGEE